

Hiring an Asbestos Abatement Contractor

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral, very strong and heat resistant, which was made into nearly three thousand products ranging from pipe insulation to cement wallboard. Asbestos has been **proven** to cause lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis, and needs to be treated with respect and handled by professionals under controlled conditions.

Currently no state or federal laws require removal or repair of ACM except in schools, but it is most important to maintain ACM in good condition to prevent serious health problems that result from breathing asbestos fibers. Some materials in good condition, like flooring and siding, can be left alone until they will be impacted by renovation or demolition activities or they can be covered over. Be careful to document the locations of covered ACM, because real estate laws require disclosure of all ACM at the time of sale.

Once a decision has been made to impact asbestos-containing material (ACM) such as pipe insulation, boiler breeching, vinyl asbestos tile, transite (cement board), siding or roofing in amounts greater than 3 linear or square feet, it **must** be removed or repaired by professionals unless specifically exempted from the DEP regulations. For example, small amounts of floor tile in good condition may be removed by a non-licensed company using an infrared tile lift machine or a heat gun provided the tiles come up whole, and single-family homeowners can remove their own asbestos siding following DEP guidelines.

Maine regulations generally require that asbestos activities be performed by a company licensed by the DEP, that the building owner (or abatement company) notify the DEP of the dates of removal, that certain work practices be followed, and that the area be inspected and tested for asbestos prior to reoccupancy. In general, the less likely the material is to release-fibers, then the less strict the regulatory requirements needed to control the release of asbestos fibers. Siding and roofing jobs are generally easier and less expensive than pipe insulation projects. When hiring an asbestos abatement contractor you want to be sure to get a contractor that will deliver the best quality of service for the best price. Be sure to obtain several bids on your project, as costs can vary considerably. Items to think about when hiring a contractor include:

- the contractor's history of and references for similar projects;
- cost - make sure comparable services are being quoted;
- details of the exact services to be provided, including monitoring, project design, replacement, damages, etc.;
- the contractor's recent history of violations of state or federal asbestos laws;
- the type and amount of liability insurance carried by the contractor;
- whether to hire a monitoring firm to ensure the removal is done in accordance with regulations.

Most importantly, talk to each contractor, learn exactly what they will do for you, check your comfort level with them, and then hire based upon overall quality of services, not just cost.

Transportation and disposal of ACM waste are regulated by the DEP as well. Once a job is complete, the waste must be transported by a DEP-licensed "non-hazardous waste transporter" to a landfill approved to accept friable asbestos. Intact non-friable asbestos waste, like roofing,

cement pipe, siding, and flooring, which is removed whole can be disposed of at local landfills in accordance with the landfill's license requirements.

If you have any questions about asbestos, or state and federal asbestos regulations, please contact the DEP Asbestos Hazard Prevention Program at (207) 287-2651.